Title: Need for early completion of gauge conversion from Tirupati to Katpadi and doubling of rail line between Guduru and Renigunta.

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DR. N. VENKATASWAMY (TIRUPATI): Sir, Tirupati, an abode of Lord Venkateswara, popularly known as Balaji in the North, is one of the most sacred pilgrim centres in India. Every day lakhs of devotees from four corners of India visit this temple town. But unfortunately, such an important pilgrim centre is not having adequate communication facilities.

To meet this demand the scheme of gauge conversion from Tirupati to Katpadi was sanctioned in the year 1992-93. But the work is progressing at a snail's pace. Similar schemes sanctioned after 1993, namely, Hospet-Gadag-Hubli-Londa, Nandyal-Dronachalam-Guntakal, Trichi to Kanchivaram, etc. have been completed long back. The allocation of Rs.12 crore made in 2000-2001 Budget is not at all sufficient. Hence, additional funds are required for completion of work before March, 2001.

Regarding conversion of gauge between Dharmavaram and Pakala, the allotment of rupees ten lakhs shown in 2000-2001 Budget appears to be nominal to keep the scheme alive. When these projects are completed, it will enable people from Kerala, Mysore and Bangalore to reach Tirupati directly instead of roundabout way and also help the development of the backward area.

Another proposal, pending with the Railway department, is laying of double line from Guduru to Renigunta. The budget allocation of Rs.17 crore shown in the 2000-2001 Budget is not at all adequate. This should be taken up and completed early. This double line will help devotees coming from West Bengal, Orissa and North-Eastern States to reach Tirupati directly without waiting at Guduru for hours.